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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT IMPROVING ACCESS TO DOCTORS

New Initiatives to Further Increase Ontario Physician Workforce

TORONTO – The McGuinty government is supporting the growing trend of more doctors practising in Ontario with new initiatives to further increase patient access to quality care, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

New statistics indicate for the first time since 1995, the number of doctors practising in Ontario has outpaced population growth between 2000 and 2005.

"We are seeing more doctors working in Ontario and we're taking steps to keep this trend moving in the right direction," said Smitherman. "These results show the McGuinty government is fixing the doctor shortage problem caused by previous government inaction. We have turned the corner and we continue this important work on behalf of patients to increase access to quality healthcare, by spreading the message that Ontario is the employer of choice."

Smitherman today announced two new important initiatives building on the government's success in improving access to doctors for Ontario's patients:

- Under the government's HealthForceOntario strategy, Ontario is increasing the number of doctors being trained to 760 this year from 702 last year – an increase of 58.

- The government is targeting the 3,000 physicians who are registered to practise in Ontario, but are living elsewhere in North America, through a recruitment drive this spring. Smitherman will kick off the tour with a visit to New York.

Data from the Ontario Physician Human Resources Data Centre show the number of doctors is on an upward trend. In 2005, the total number of doctors grew to 22,277 – an increase of 9.4 per cent from 2000. This growth outpaced Ontario's population increase in the same time period of 7.4 per cent.

"Our government has made Ontario the province of choice for physicians to practise through new models of care and further investments to increase compensation levels," said Smitherman.

The initiatives announced today build on Ontario's successes in increasing access to physicians through HealthForceOntario (healthforceontario.ca), Ontario's plan to increase access to care and health care professionals. Results of government initiatives to date include:

- increasing the number of training positions for foreign-trained physicians from 90 to 200 each year
- increasing family medicine training positions by 70 per cent
- increasing medical school enrolment by 23 per cent.

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Media Contacts:

David Spencer
Minister's Office
416-327-4320

A.G. Klei
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
416-314-6197

Members of the general public: 1-866-532-3161.

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